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Modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries and in-depth review of library activities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001 that the Secretary-General conduct a review of library services covering the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the libraries of the United Nations Offices at Geneva and at Vienna, libraries in the regional commissions, departmental libraries, libraries at information centres and depository libraries with a view to defining the purpose of United Nations library services and identifying primary clients or users and the relationships and roles of the libraries, including the best way to achieve their mandates. It further requested him to implement as soon as possible new and more efficient ways of providing library services.

The report provides background information on the mission of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and other United Nations libraries as well as on library services for permanent missions and Secretariat departments, the depository library system, reference services of United Nations information centres and the relationships among the various United Nations libraries.

A major focus of the report is the coordinating role of the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries, chaired by the Director, Outreach Division, Department of Public Information, in implementing new and more efficient library services. Updated information is provided on achievements of the Steering Committee in all major areas of library activity, including an initial research gateway web page in the six official languages; a common list of serial holdings; a manual for bibliographic description posted on the Intranet; and the identification of additional online services to be acquired through the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium.

The report concludes by recommending that United Nations libraries (and those of agencies of the United Nations system), working in concert, bring their specialized expertise in information management to bear in the development of the knowledge-sharing initiatives of the system.

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraphs 34 and 35 of its resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to conduct a review of library services covering the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the libraries of the United Nations Offices at Geneva and at Vienna, libraries in the regional commissions, departmental libraries, libraries at information centres and depository libraries with a view to defining the purpose of United Nations library services and identifying primary clients or users and the relationships and roles of the libraries, including the best way to achieve their mandates through the relevant intergovernmental bodies, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to implement as soon as possible new and more efficient ways of providing library services.

2. The present report is submitted pursuant to the above requests, as well as the requests contained in paragraph 14 of General Assembly resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002 and paragraph 82 of its resolution 58/101 B of 9 December 2003. It incorporates the results of questionnaires sent in May 2002 to United Nations libraries at all major duty stations, departmental reference collections at Headquarters, other departmental staff at Headquarters, United Nations information centres and depository libraries receiving United Nations documents (there was an 84 per cent response rate to the questionnaire). In addition, interviews were conducted with over 40 individuals, librarians, users and other officials. The report also covers the establishment of the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries (in implementation of para. 35 of resolution 56/253), as well as its achievements to date.

II. Background

3. In accordance with the original mandate for library services (contained in document A/C.5/298 of 28 September 1949, entitled "Library policy and organization"), the Library's primary function is to enable the delegations, Secretariat and other official groups of the Organization to obtain, with the greatest possible speed, convenience and economy, the library materials and information needed in the execution of their duties. Nevertheless, the Library also had a mandate to go beyond those groups, to give service, as far as feasible, to the specialized agencies, accredited representatives of the media, international government organizations, affiliated non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, scholars and writers. Furthermore, through a depository libraries programme and the publication of printed indexes, the Library was mandated to reach out to the general public worldwide.

4. With the opportunities arising from the information revolution, as well as the new perspectives stemming from the incorporation of the Headquarters library, now called the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, into the Department of Public Information in 1993, this external outreach has taken on increased importance. Today, the Library is moving in the direction of a virtual library, while not neglecting the printed materials required by its users. It serves a primary clientele consisting of missions and Secretariat staff, but is reaching out increasingly to civil society, particularly through its web sites and its services to depository libraries. It is also striving to

become more multilingual in its outputs, within the limits of its resources. Its new mission statement is therefore:

> To create and/or provide timely and up-to-date information products and services, to meet the needs of delegates, Secretariat staff and researchers; to facilitate access to United Nations information for depository libraries and the general public worldwide; to contribute to "bridging the digital divide"; to mobilize the international library community, in particular depository libraries, as conduits of outreach to civil society; and to oversee and coordinate the activities of United Nations libraries.

5. Other United Nations libraries have also been moving in the direction of increased electronic access as well as public outreach, within their capacity. The library at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has a specific mandate to provide services to local educational institutions, while the library at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) plays a leading role in disseminating information in its region.

6. The United Nations Office at Geneva Library offers state-of-the-art facilities, including research areas equipped with 44 computer workstations, and has launched a programme of library information sessions in a dedicated training room. The Library has converted its manual card catalogue to electronic format, thereby providing electronic access to Library collections dating back to 1919. The Geneva Library offers its Integrated Library Management System as the backbone infrastructure for libraries of the United Nations and the United Nations system in Geneva and elsewhere in Europe, with the libraries of the following organizations being part of its network of satellite libraries: the United Nations Office at Geneva Terminology Section, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the International Organization for Migration, the International Telecommunication Union, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the United Nations Office at Vienna. To preserve and provide increased access to the institutional memory of the Organization, the Geneva Library is in the process of acquiring equipment that will enable it to digitize documents and preserve them on microfiche in one operation. In addition to providing a large constituency of scholars and representatives of civil society with access to a wealth of information resources, the Library has become the coordinator of an active programme of cultural activities at the Geneva office, developed in the context of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. In 2002, 18,350 people attended cultural events at the Palais des Nations, including exhibitions, concerts, talks and performances of dance, theatre and film, all conducted under the auspices of the Geneva Library.

III. Library services for permanent missions and Secretariat departments

7. Library services specifically for permanent missions and Secretariat departments include: the purchase of books and serials; reference and research services; access to online services, most acquired through the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium led by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library; electronic dissemination of information via e-mail; training

in online searching of United Nations and non-United Nations Internet sites; assistance in organizing departmental collections; assistance in creating databases; digitization of documents; provision of a subject thesaurus in the six official languages; and needs assessment in relation to all of the above. In addition, library services available to the public, most of which serve the primary clientele as well, include: UNBISNET (bibliographic database on the web at http://unbisnet.un.org); printed indexes to United Nations documentation; the Library's web site (http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl), including reference tools for access to United Nations documents; regional training programmes in United Nations documentation and in accessing United Nations web sites for depository libraries; global e-mail messages to depository libraries; a technical cooperation programme for small and field libraries; reference services for visiting scholars; and inter-library loan services to other libraries.

8. Furthermore, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has been contributing to the promotion of multilingualism and to the development of the Official Document System (ODS), in accordance with numerous requests by the General Assembly, most recently in its resolution 56/253. The Library is making ongoing efforts to develop its web pages in the six official languages, to the extent possible within existing resources. While its budget for books and serials is limited, it has been attempting to diversify its acquisitions in the official languages. Furthermore, the Library has ensured its staffing capacity in those languages.

9. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library bibliographic records have been the source of the limited metadata attached to documents on ODS since the inception of that system. Furthermore, once it became technically possible to do so, the Library began to create direct linkages between the complete records in the Library's United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS) and the full texts of documents stored on ODS. All records for documents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies are now linked to the text of those documents in all languages of issuance. Furthermore, through the UNBIS thesaurus file, searching of ODS by established descriptors in the six official languages has been made possible. Finally, through the efforts of the Library, ODS access was secured for depository libraries as an option in place of printed copies of parliamentary documents.

10. One particular service that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library provides to Secretariat departments is the backstopping of departmental reference collections. These are specialized collections of documents, monographs, serials and, in some cases, audio-visual materials, of direct relevance mainly to the department concerned. In accordance with Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/152 of 4 March 1976, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library provides advice and support to those reference centres. The staff of the specialized collections, in turn, often serve as the focal points for departmental requests for Library materials and for the routing of serials to departmental staff. The results of the survey referred to in paragraph 2 indicated that the staff members in charge of those collections would like more regular contact with the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. Therefore, more general meetings and individual follow-up by the collection librarian are planned. The reference centres are potentially effective marketers of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library's services within their departments.

11. The survey results also indicated the following areas in which services to departments (as well as to permanent missions and other clients) could be improved or enhanced:

- Regular electronic alerts of new information sources, services and acquisitions
- Increase in the purchase of monographs (and some serials) on subjects related to substantive work
- Increase in specialized online services
- Selective dissemination of information from online databases (in addition to information from electronic journals that is currently provided)
- Continued and increased technical cooperation with departments in cataloguing, digitization, etc.

IV. Depository libraries system

12. As mandated in document A/C.5/298 and in order to make United Nations documents and publications available throughout the world, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library oversees a worldwide network of depository libraries. As at 30 June 2002, there were 408 such institutions in 144 countries. As stipulated in the principles governing United Nations depository libraries (ST/AI/189/Add.11/Rev.2 of 18 August 1995), the libraries are expected to maintain the material in good order and to make it accessible to the public, free of charge, at reasonable hours. The traditional role of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in relation to those libraries was mainly administrative: to process applications for depository status, to ensure, through questionnaires and visits, that depository libraries fulfilled their mandated obligations and to assist with claims for missing documents. It also provided guidance through correspondence, received and trained visiting librarians at Headquarters and issued successive editions of the manual entitled "UN Documentation" (which has been expanded and published on the Internet with the title "United Nations Documentation: Research Guide"). In recent years, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has also come to see depository libraries as an important link to civil society, providing the opportunity for outreach to ordinary people in Member States as well as a vehicle for bridging the digital divide. Additional activities include some funding of local travel to encourage depository library visits by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and other staff already in a given country on other official or personal business; creation of a depository libraries web page; the regular dispatch of e-mail messages to depository libraries, alerting them to the latest United Nations issues, campaigns and observances; encouraging depository libraries to publicize their collections and to conduct symposiums, exhibits, and the like on United Nations themes; training programmes; and advocacy.

13. With regard to the latter, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has initiated a worldwide training programme for depository libraries in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Since 1997, regional workshops have been held in collaboration with regional commission libraries or United Nations information centres, and in the appropriate official language, in Bangkok, Beirut, Bucharest, Islamabad, Mexico City, Moscow, New Delhi, Port of Spain, Pretoria, Rabat and Santiago. Depository librarians have been trained in accessing United Nations information, with an emphasis on electronic information sources. Basic

Internet training has also been provided for librarians who have had little or no previous access to the web. Unfortunately, funding for bringing depository librarians to the training site decreased in the biennium 2004-2005, which limits the number of workshops that can be offered to one per year.

14. In terms of advocacy, through the active intervention of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, depository libraries have been granted free or concessional access to a number of United Nations databases, such as the treaty database. Most importantly, depository libraries with free or full deposit were granted the option to receive their entitlements in the form of ODS access rather than in printed form. It must be noted, however, that of 340 such libraries worldwide, only 123 have elected that option thus far. Since the Organization is moving in the direction of electronic distribution of parliamentary documents, the Library has directed its 2004 biennial questionnaire to ascertaining the capacity of depository libraries to receive documentation electronically.

V. Relationship among the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the United Nations information centres and the depository libraries

15. The reference services at United Nations information centres provide direct information support to information centre staff as well as access to United Nations documentation and information products for the public at their respective locations. The primary clientele are university students and researchers, representatives of the media and non-governmental organizations and government officials. A three-way relationship exists between the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the United Nations information centres and depository libraries. The Library offers technical backstopping to information centres through its small and field libraries programme. The information centres, for their part, have traditionally been the strongest partners of the Library in assisting and monitoring the depository libraries in their areas. Depository libraries with extensive retrospective collections have served as back-up facilities for clientele of the information centres with limited collections. The information centres have also collaborated with the Library in organizing and serving as the venue for depository library workshops (hosting 7 of the 11 held thus far). In turn, United Nations information centre staff at the office concerned as well as at other centres in the region have attended those workshops. Finally, the information centres have been strongly encouraged to include depository libraries in their thematic campaigns as extensions of their outreach to the general public.

16. The above activities need to be continued and strengthened. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has been placing increasing emphasis, in cooperation with the Information Centres Service of the Strategic Communications Division, on making the information centres aware of the services it provides, particularly the small and field libraries programme. While a number of information centres have active ongoing relationships with depository libraries in their home cities, the practice needs to be institutionalized worldwide. The joint organization of exhibits, symposiums and so on would enlarge the target audiences for such events. Mutual training opportunities could also be exploited, as information centre reference assistants may have more day-to-day practical knowledge of United Nations documentation and campaigns, while depository library staff are more likely to be

trained librarians with extensive professional knowledge. Mutual access to online databases must be encouraged. Finally, within the framework of closer cooperation between the information centres and depository libraries, the feasibility of transferring large United Nations collections from information centre libraries to nearby depository libraries will be examined and pursued. In other cases, information centres located at United Nations houses and other common premises will seek to establish a unified United Nations reference service for their area.

17. In the context of the regionalization of the network of information centres in Western Europe, the collections of the nine information centres that were closed on 31 December 2003 have been transferred to other United Nations and non-United Nations entities. The collections of two information centres, in Athens and Rome, will remain in place, administered and maintained by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) respectively. The bulk of the collections of three other information centres of the region, in Brussels, Madrid and Paris, have been transferred to the new regional United Nations information centre in Brussels, thus enabling the centre to maintain a collection of United Nations documents and publications in the three official languages spoken in the region. The Copenhagen and London collections have been transferred in full to depository libraries in Roskilde, Denmark, and Leuven, Belgium, respectively. Finally, the Bonn and Lisbon collections have each been divided and transferred to several institutions in those cities, including other United Nations offices, depository libraries and educational institutions. The Bonn information centre's collection of United Nations documents in German was transferred to the centre in Brussels. As part of the further regionalization of the network of United Nations information centres in developing countries, the Department of Public Information will explore ways to strengthen the library and resource centres in the proposed regional information centres, while retaining those resources at the offices of the resident coordinators in the other capitals. To this end, the Department will explore with the United Nations Development Group the possibility of a cost-sharing mechanism that would enable it to maintain its reference services in developing countries, where vast segments of the population are not benefiting from the present information and technological revolution.

18. Despite the achievements of individual libraries, the survey revealed that United Nations libraries have been operating independently, with limited coordination or common direction. Costly modernization efforts have been undertaken by each library acting alone. Given the advantages that the Internet and other communication technologies provide, opportunities now exist to create greater synergy and greater integration among United Nations libraries to render more effective service to their diverse clients. Closer coordination is required among the libraries in order that they might share knowledge more effectively among themselves, promote knowledge sharing within the Secretariat at large, provide better library services to delegates and staff, enhance multilingualism, achieve greater outreach to the general public and contribute to bridging the digital divide in Member States. Various initiatives are also under way at the inter-agency level that deserve support. Better coordination at all levels will lead to some savings as well; however, a significant investment will be required to enhance online services as well as to create a more electronic environment.

19. The responses to the questionnaires referred to in paragraph 2 also validate the Secretary-General's intention, made clear in his report on strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387 and Corr.1), to call for strong leadership of United Nations libraries by the Department of Public Information, through the Outreach Division and the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, in order to ensure: the implementation of library standards; the development of professional tools; the development of electronic products and services, particularly web portals; staff training and development; and the oversight of shared activities (indexing, digitization, extended reference, etc.). Recent areas of collaboration among United Nations libraries are outlined below.

A. United Nations Office at Geneva and Dag Hammarskjöld Library

20. The mandate contained in the General Assembly document setting out library policy and organization (A/C.5/298) envisioned a close collaboration between the Headquarters and Geneva libraries. Over the years, however, two separate libraries developed that occasionally engaged in cooperative efforts. The relationship that developed between the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and what is now called the United Nations Office at Geneva Library could be described as one of collaboration between two separate entities in certain specific areas, with the Dag Hammarskjöld Library serving as the lead agency:

(a) The United Nations Office at Geneva Library has been responsible for indexing specific series of United Nations documents issued in Geneva and entering the records directly into the database managed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, which is then made available to the public via UNBISNET (http://unbisnet.un.org). Librarians in Geneva propose new subject descriptors and proper name authority entries, for which the Dag Hammarskjöld Library specialists are ultimately responsible. Indexing policy directives are issued by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, after consultation with United Nations Office at Geneva staff;

(b) The Geneva Library is a member of the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium, managed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, for joint access to commercial online services;

(c) While each library purchases the printed materials required by its local clients, the two libraries maintain an active inter-library loan relationship;

(d) Geneva-based librarians participate in the programme of visits to depository libraries.

B. United Nations Office at Vienna

21. Library services at the Vienna International Centre were provided from 1979 onwards by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as an inter-agency common service. During the 2001-2002 period, however, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization withdrew to establish their own libraries, at which point IAEA informed the United Nations Office at Vienna that it could no longer continue to provide common library services. As a result, since 1 April 2002, there has been no central library serving the United Nations agencies in general, or the United Nations

Office at Vienna in particular. Library and information services are decentralized to 17 library focal points, with book and serial purchases handled by the United Nations Office at Vienna Commercial Operations Unit. Monitoring of expenditures, reference services for United Nations documents and access to online services (acquired mainly through the Consortium) are provided by the Linguistic Support Unit, Conference Services.

22. In view of the ad hoc nature of library services at the United Nations Office at Vienna, a special review of the collections and information delivery logistics at that duty station was conducted in December 2002, with the assistance of a librarian from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. A number of recommendations resulting from the review have already been put into effect, notably those concerning the purchase of library materials and access to online services, the acquisition of an integrated library management system, the inter-operability of systems, training programmes for users of online services, digitization of major historical documents, creation of a centralized catalogue for United Nations Office at Vienna resources (housed on the United Nations Office at Geneva Library server) and an e-library portal on the Vienna Intranet site.

C. Other United Nations libraries

23. As far as the smaller United Nations libraries are concerned, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library conducts training and mentoring programmes. Librarians from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), ESCAP, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations University (UNU) have attended two-week training courses at Headquarters and have been provided with electronic copies of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library database structure. Furthermore, in 2000 the Dag Hammarskjöld Library initiated its small and field libraries programme. Among the goals of this programme are to enable librarians in United Nations small and field libraries to deliver high-quality service to their users and to encourage the exchange of professional ideas, training, standards and recommended best practices. As a first step, a database structure in English, French and Spanish was designed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library using Winisis, software developed and distributed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization that is widely used in Latin America, Africa and Asia. A package including the database structure, the software and various manuals was sent to a number of institutions, including libraries in the field, United Nations information centres and some depository libraries. The second step was the launch of a dedicated web site at the end of November 2000. The site, which is updated regularly, is intended to serve as a centralized gateway to documentation and other pertinent electronic resources available on the Internet. Third, librarians can receive direct technical support from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library staff via e-mail or participate in an online forum, which is part of the web site.

24. It should also be noted that regional commissions and various field offices participate in the Consortium, managed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, which has enabled access to commercial online services to be purchased at volume-driven concessional prices.

25. Another form of collaboration involves the training of depository librarians. Several regional commissions (ESCAP, ESCWA and ECLAC) have served as venues for regional workshops to which the Commission librarians have contributed and from which they have benefited.

26. Nevertheless, as stated above, the survey made clear that cooperation between Headquarters and the field as well as among the libraries at the various duty stations could be improved. Areas of further collaboration could include:

- The participation of regional commission libraries that are capable of doing so in indexing and digitization activities
- Recommendations by libraries away from Headquarters concerning local intellectual output that could be acquired at Headquarters or other duty stations
- Mutual reliance with respect to information services
- Collaborative development of multilingual web sites
- Collaborative development of professional tools and training programmes, particularly materials that could be shared with local libraries in developing countries
- Development of an extended-hours reference service, encompassing duty stations worldwide.

VI. Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries

27. To achieve greater collaboration among the Organization's libraries, facilitate their continuing modernization and implement new and more efficient ways of providing library services, the relationships among the libraries needed to be more clearly defined and a structural mechanism put in place. On the initiative of the Deputy Secretary-General and in the spirit of the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387 and Corr.1, paras. 73-75 and action 9), a Steering Committee on the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries was formed in January 2003. Chaired by the Director, Outreach Division, Department of Public Information, and including representatives of libraries from all major duty stations, the Steering Committee has held four meetings (three by videoconference) and has embarked on an ambitious work programme (see A/AC.198/2003/5). Achievements to date are noted below.

A. Archival collections

28. Since New York and Geneva both service key intergovernmental meetings, it was agreed that both the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the United Nations Office at Geneva Library would maintain archival collections of United Nations documents and publications to the extent feasible. However, they would not attempt to be exhaustive in the collection of materials from lower-level subsidiary bodies of the regional commissions; this task would primarily be the responsibility of the libraries at the respective duty stations. To that extent, the collections would be in the nature

of a distributed archive. To assist other libraries in filling gaps in their collections, the smaller duty stations (specifically, the United Nations Office at Vienna, ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UNU and, to some extent, the United Nations Office at Nairobi) prepared inventories of their collections.

29. However, given that ODS will soon be opened up to the public at large, it was decided that before tackling paper-based collections, priority had to be given to filling gaps in ODS from its inception in 1993 to the present. This has become a joint endeavour of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the United Nations Office at Geneva Library, in close collaboration with the Information Technology Services Division of the Department of Management and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has devised computer programs to identify gaps and errors in both ODS and its own related bibliographic records, and has been granted access to correct certain errors in the ODS metadata. Missing documents will be digitized from microfiche or printed documents in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library's collections. In some cases, it is expected that missing documents in the various languages will be supplied by the text-processing units of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management from their back-up disks.

30. The United Nations Office at Geneva Library, as part of a preservation-related project, has downloaded several thousand documents in Arabic and Chinese from ODS that had been digitized by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and has produced sets of microfiche for both libraries.

B. Bibliographic control of United Nations documents

31. In order to ensure common standards for indexing and cataloguing and thus facilitate the integration of records from other United Nations libraries into the United Nations Bibliographic Information System, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, in close collaboration with the United Nations Office at Geneva Library, has posted a reference manual for bibliographic description to the Intranet. The manual covers all data elements for indexing and cataloguing both United Nations and non-United Nations materials. Work is currently in progress on data elements for special files (voting records, speeches, etc.). The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has also been meeting with representatives of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to standardize document symbols in the various electronic systems (the electronic Documents Registration, Information and Tracking System, or e-DRITS, ODS and UNBIS), as well as to devise measures to provide titles in the six official languages in those databases.

C. Collaborative reference services

32. Several reference initiatives were undertaken, including the posting of an initial research gateway page, in the six official languages on the web; an after-hours telephone reference service between the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the United Nations Office at Geneva Library; a set of guidelines for a proposed "Ask a Librarian" joint online query service; and an Intranet page, entitled "United Nations libraries: core areas of specialization and contact information".

D. Collection development

33. A number of projects were undertaken in this area. A common list of serial holdings was produced, covering almost all United Nations libraries, to assist member libraries in developing their collections and in sharing resources. Since it proved useful to member libraries for both acquisition decisions and inter-library loans, a second version is planned for early 2004. To encourage the development of common standards, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library updated its collection development guidelines and distributed them to its partner libraries. Other member libraries are expected to do likewise. In addition, a number of online services were identified that had been acquired separately by several member libraries. They were added to the list of products to be acquired through the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium, managed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

34. Several members of the Steering Committee expressed concern about the difficulties and costs associated with obtaining publications or accessing databases of other agencies of the United Nations system. This issue was, therefore, raised by Steering Committee members attending the meeting of the inter-agency Knowledge Sharing and Information Management Network, held in Geneva in September 2003. The result was a recommendation to the High Level Committee on Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, which was favourably received by that body. The Chairman of the Steering Committee then sent a letter to the heads of the specialized agencies, funds and programmes transmitting the text of the High Level Committee on Management, in which it noted the work of the Knowledge Sharing and Information Management Group and supported the recommendation that organizations make available their publications and databases to United Nations system members on a reciprocal basis, and urged them to take the steps necessary to make the published information of each agency available without charge to all other agencies of the United Nations system.

E. Common web sites

35. As noted above, a number of joint outputs have already been posted to the Internet/Intranet. Meanwhile, common home pages for the United Nations libraries are being finalized, including a common logo (the United Nations logo accompanied by the words "United Nations Libraries" in the six official languages).

F. Small and field libraries

36. A preliminary survey of small and field libraries, including those in United Nations information centres, was conducted. Areas identified for improvement in the context of Steering Committee activities include collaborative reference services at the local level, resource sharing and training. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library, which has already posted reference tools on its small and field libraries web site, has agreed to take the lead in developing online training modules.

G. Management issues

37. In the autumn of 2003, a senior librarian of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library visited Nairobi on a consultancy mission, which resulted in a report on the feasibility and mechanisms for the establishment of a common library at the duty station, including UNEP, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and possibly other entities. The report was very well-received by those offices. Since then, the UNEP Library has undertaken to operate as a de facto United Nations library in Nairobi. The collections of UN-Habitat, UNIFEM, the United Nations information centre, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have been integrated into the library, and the United Nations Office at Nairobi, UNDP and UN-Habitat have contributed to its renovation and/or staffing.

H. Future directions

38. The Steering Committee will continue to meet quarterly during 2004, mainly by videoconference, while the subcommittees will continue to communicate through e-mail and documentation posted on a common Intranet site. During the year, it is expected that the United Nations libraries' web sites will be fully operational, gaps in documents on ODS from 1993 to the present will be filled, online training modules for small and field libraries will be developed, a collaborative "Ask Your Librarian" site will be launched and the research manual for bibliographic description will be completed for all databases of the UNBIS. In addition, electronic databases offered through the Consortium will be augmented to include more services of interest to all United Nations libraries. To ensure that due emphasis is given to the role of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in fostering these common ventures, one of its performance indicators adopted for the 2004-2005 budget is "the number of joint and/or coordinated projects by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and other United Nations libraries" (see General Assembly resolution 58/270, annex I, sect. 28, table 28.22).

39. In order to serve library users more effectively, however, the member libraries and the Steering Committee itself need to make certain efforts for which current funding is insufficient. These include a modest increase in print acquisitions; a substantial increase in access to commercial online services; the acquisition of software to permit the generation of automatic electronic alerts from a variety of databases; and holding regional training courses for depository librarians, videoconferences and annual meetings of the Steering Committee. The objective is to move further in the direction of a virtual library network, with resources that can be shared across duty stations, while not neglecting the print resources required by local users.

VII. Inter-agency level

40. The libraries of the United Nations system have been meeting regularly and managing joint projects since 1995, most recently as the Knowledge Sharing and Information Management Network. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has long played

an active role in this forum and has led a number of its initiatives. Increased attendance at its meetings, including attendance by representatives of other libraries of the Organization, indicates a growing interest in joint activities as well as an acknowledgement of dependencies in working in an Internet-connected world. The efforts of the Network deserve strong support, as they are fully congruent with the growing Secretariat interest in knowledge sharing, including the Extranet, the United Nations system Internet portal and common search engine, communities of practice and digital archives. Two projects of the Knowledge Sharing and Information Management network call for particular attention at the present time. The United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium, founded and managed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, has grown from an initial 17 members to 54 members covering more than 70 offices worldwide, and now provides 41 electronic information products. The Consortium needs to be expanded to include a richer menu of products and services vital to the efficient work of the Organization and of other agencies of the common system. A memorandum of agreement has been put into effect to provide a firm administrative basis for this major endeavour.

41. Furthermore, the United Nations Libraries Shared Cataloguing and Public Access System, an inter-agency catalogue, is currently available on the web (http://uncaps.unsystem.org). However, it needs to be expanded and re-engineered on a more up-to-date platform, and a source of funding will have to be identified for that purpose. The World Intellectual Property Organization, the lead agency for this endeavour, is currently preparing a project plan.

VIII. Conclusions

42. The expertise of the library community of practice should be utilized to enhance information management within the Organization as a whole. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library is now chairing the Task Force on Sharing the Knowledge of the Secretariat Internally and Externally under the Secretariat-wide Information and Communications Technology Board. United Nations libraries must play a leading role in ensuring that all libraries of the Organization, together with those of its sister agencies, may bring their specialized expertise in information management to bear in development of the knowledge-sharing initiatives of the system.